

VZCZCXRO3648
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1832/01 1540637
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 030637Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1505
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001832

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/29/2017
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER GOVERNOR OF BAGHDAD ASKED TO TAKE ISCI
ADVISOR JOB

REF: BAGHDAD 1552

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Charles O. Blaha for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a Baghdad PRT reporting cable. This cable is
the third of a series describing political moderates in
Baghdad and efforts to encourage moderate politicians and
empower moderate movements.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Former Governor of Baghdad Ali Fadel
al-Misir recently took a position as a special advisor in the
office of Vice President Adel Abd al-Mehdi, ending his
self-imposed exile from politics in Baghdad begun in 2005,
when he was asked to step down from the Governorship by ISCI
(formerly SCIRI) leadership. Al-Misir claims that in 2005
his pro-American stance cost him his position, but due to a
recent change in ISCI strategy it is now considered an asset
to an ISCI party looking to strengthen its pro-American
credentials. While having long-standing ties to members of
the ISCI establishment, al-Misir considers himself a
political independent and hopes to maintain ties with ISCI
while establishing a coalition of political moderates who
worked with him when he served as Governor. END SUMMARY.

Recruited by ISCI to take a position in the VP's office

13. (C) Ali Fadel al-Misir told PRTOff that earlier this
month that he was asked by Humam Hamoudi (ISCI
parliamentarian) to take a position as a special advisor on
Vice President Adel Abd al-Mehdi's staff. Al-Misir said that
the position involves attending conferences on behalf of the
Vice President, like the recent UN-sponsored conference on
water resources in Jordan. Al-Misir has not held any
position since resigning as Governor of Baghdad in early 2005
and told PRTOff that his signing on with Abd al-Mehdi
indicated two things: one, that ISCI seeks to downplay its
Iranian-sponsored legacy through the inclusion of more
moderates with pro-American credentials and two, he just
really needs a job.

Previous work experience: Governor of Baghdad

14. (C) Al-Misir was elevated to serve as Governor of Baghdad
in December 2004 when then-Governor Ali al-Haidery was
assassinated. Al-Misir was then Baghdad's Provincial Council
Chairman. Under the CPA local council system in place at the
time, Provincial Council members were chosen from lower
councils in a cascading caucus process. A Neighborhood
Council chose al-Misir to serve on a District Council, that
District Council chose him to sit on the Provincial Council
(PC), and that body selected him to serve as its Chairman.
Al-Misir maintained a cooperative relationship with Coalition
forces and Embassy personnel and openly expressed his

pro-American leanings while serving on these councils. After al-Haidery's assassination, the PC voted for al-Misir to be Governor of Baghdad.

15. (C) Elections for a new Provincial Council were held in January 2005 and a SCIRI/Badr coalition took a majority of the council's seats (28 out of 51). While politically independent, al-Misir felt that his previous connections to SCIRI (now ISCI) leadership while in exile in the 1980's would keep him in office. Humam Hamoudi, a family friend and SCIRI party leader, came to him in March 2005 and indicated that he would be offered a Deputy Governor position by the new PC, but would not be asked to remain as Governor. Al-Misir was told by others that his openly pro-American attitude did not sit well with members of the new PC. This PC broke off relations with Embassy and Coalition personnel soon after sitting in session in March 2005. Al-Misir submitted his resignation and the PC chose a Badr Corps commander, Hussein Ali al-Tahan to serve as Baghdad's Governor.

16. (C) After his resignation, al-Misir decided to stay aloof from politics, biding his time until a comeback was possible. From 2005 until 2007 he met periodically with Coalition and Embassy personnel (including PRTOff) to provide atmospherics and intelligence on Baghdad politics and political leaders. Al-Misir remained a member of the Karkh District Council, but chose to remain a 'behind-the-scenes' advisor to that council's leaders. Al-Misir says he was approached by several parties to run in the December 2005 elections, but decided to maintain his credibility as an independent.

A history with SCIRI leadership

BAGHDAD 00001832 002 OF 002

17. (C) Al-Misir explained the series of events that brought him into contact with SCIRI party leaders. Growing up in the Karkh district of Baghdad he was friends with Gadir Hamoudi, nephew to Humam Hamoudi. During the Iran-Iraq War, al-Misir and Gadir Hamoudi deserted the Iraqi Army and eventually ended up crossing the border into Iran, where they were promptly thrown in jail by the Iranians. Humam Hamoudi, then in exile in Iran, lobbied for their release and gave al-Misir a job writing press reports for his office. Al-Misir said he was approached by Iranian intelligence and asked to work as an agent against Iraq, but he refused. Humam Hamoudi then arranged for him to work with Mohammed al-Haidery (then SCIRI leader, and now ISCI parliamentarian) in Syria. Deciding to sneak back into Iraq at the close of the war with Iran, al-Misir rode from Damascus back to Baghdad on a motorcycle. Iraqi intelligence never tracked him down after his desertion, and he never told his family his true whereabouts for the nine months he was missing.

Working with the Americans to build a new Iraq

18. (C) Al-Misir comes from a wealthy Shia family with a long history in the Karkh district. The family fortune took a hit after the 1991 invasion of Kuwait and worsened under the sanctions subsequently placed on the regime. Al-Misir said that throughout the 1990's he and his family looked forward to the inevitable fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. "It was just a matter of time until the Americans came and helped us get rid of Saddam," al-Misir said. Religious extremism, in the form of Wahhabism and resurgent Shiism, began to grow in largely secular Iraq at this time, concerning seculars like al-Misir. With the invasion and liberation of Iraq, al-Misir looked forward to a peaceful post-war reconstruction guided by the US and its Western principles. "In 2003, we thought a new Iraq would someday turn out like Germany did, with American help," al-Misir said. He eagerly volunteered to

serve on a local neighborhood council in Karkh in 2003, working closely with Coalition and Embassy personnel.

ISCI weakness forces them closer to the US

19. (C) Al-Misir told PRTOff that the ISCI party is in trouble, challenged by the rise of the Sadr Movement. Their strategy is to find a pragmatic balance between their ties to Iran and the US. ISCI leaders approached him because his pro-American stance will lend them credibility in this endeavor, in his view.

Politics is about pragmatism

10. (C) While working for the ISCI party, Al-Misir intends to continue his efforts to build a coalition of political and social moderates that will support civil society organizations in Baghdad and may possibly run in future elections in Baghdad. Called the 'Baghdad League', this group consists of many members of Baghdad's local councils that worked with al-Misir when he was Provincial Council Chairman and Governor of Baghdad. Al-Misir criticizes the major political parties as being run by extremists, and beholden to foreign interests and says that ISCI is certainly guilty of being "too close" to Iran. However, politics is about being pragmatic, al-Misir said, so one must always balance the short term needs with the long term goals. "Right now," al-Misir said, "I just need a job."
CROCKER